Brand Image of Durable and Non Durable Products: A Factorial Analysis

Research Proposal submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In

MANAGEMENT

By

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Under the Guidance of

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7/7/2013

JK Lakshmipat University

(Recognized by Govt. of Rajasthan and covered u/s 2(f) of the UGC Act 1956)

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1. Introduction

In business world today it is important to be able to differentiate your product from all others. Companies have to consider how they can win over the customers and what images and qualities they want the consumers to possess of their product or service. The study deals with brand image: how to create certain images in customers' minds. It is easy for a company to define what it wants to be like (brand identity) but the hard part is to mediate the same characteristics and promises to consumers (brand image). Kapferer's (1997, 95) identity and image framework is shown to support this thinking.

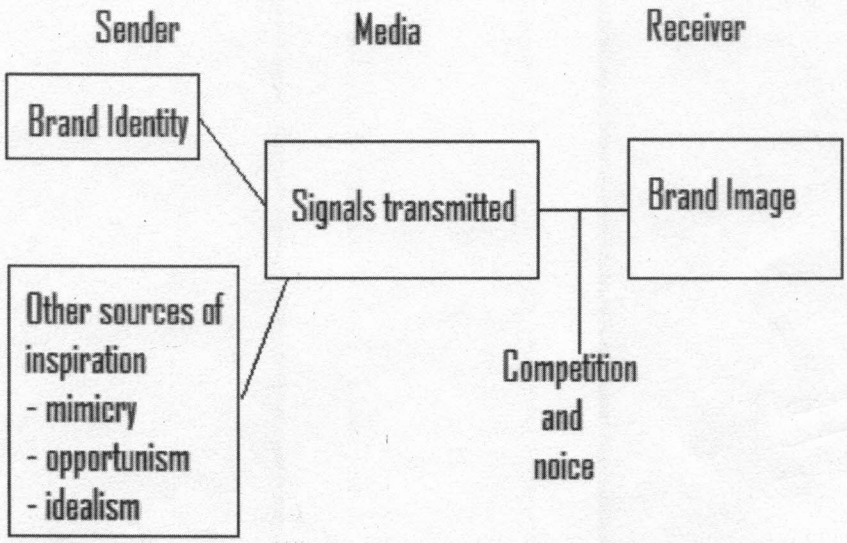


FIGURE 1. Identity and image framework according to Kapferer (Kapferer 1997, 95)

Branding has become a necessity in business. Just a product or service is not enough anymore. Additional value and especially fine brand management are also needed. It is fascinating to study how branding can affect a human mind. For a brand to leverage, it is very important to understand the consumers' perception. Proper understanding of how a consumer perceives a brand will help the marketers

to get maximum benefit. How a consumer perceives a brand is called as brand image. ***"Brand image" is the customer's net extract from the brand.*** Under this study we tried to explore the Brand Image of durable and non-durable products

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Brand History

Prior to the 19th century, manufacturers were limited to trading their products in their local markets (Jones and Morgan, 1994; Moore and Reid, 2008). In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, through improvement of production processes, transportation, and communication, the industrial revolution led to the development of international trade among countries (Jones and Morgan, 1994; Keller, 2008). Domestic manufacturers expanded their businesses to buyers in foreign countries, beginning to use a trademark for consumers to recognize, and to differentiate products/service from those of global competitors (Moore and Reid, 2008). A trademark refers to any distinctive word, design, or non-descriptive mark attached to goods (Cohen, 1986). According to the American Marketing Association, between the nineteenth to early twentieth century, a brand was regarded the same as a trademark e.g., a name, sign, logo, and symbol (Kotler and Keller, 2006). The purpose of branding during this period of time was to reinforce the perceived value of a product through positive associations that consumers have with it (Farquhar, 1989).

In the twentieth century, the purpose of branding evolved from associations with tangible product features to intangible, symbolic features emblematic of personality and lifestyle (Schmitt, 1999; Gobé, 2001; Neumeier, 2006; Healey, 2008; Moore and Reid, 2008). Traditional marketing focused on creating brands

that provide tangible benefits through product features and quality; whereas, recent marketing has focused on intangible aspects of branding, tapping into sensory and emotional elements of brand experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Gobé, 2001). Therefore, providing consumers with a deep emotional experience, associated with a brand, became increasingly important for brand managers seeking to obtain positive responses from consumers (Gobé, 2001; Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006; Healey, 2008).

2.2. Branding

Today, a successful brand is one of the most important assets to many businesses (Esch et al., 2006; Broyles et al., 2009). A brand is a unique element (e.g., name, symbol, and design) that identifies the products or services of one organization from those of competitors, and contributes to enhancing the value of the offerings (Farquhar, 1989; Aaker, 1991; Solomon & Stuart, 2002). Therefore, branding is the process of using a name, symbol, design, and experience to differentiate goods/services by providing distinct images, associations, and experiences related to the offerings and firms (Schmitt, 1999; Neumeier, 2006). A consistent image, positive associations, and favourable attitudes formed from memorable experiences are essential in building a strong brand (Farquhar, 1989). Branding benefits both businesses and consumers in a variety of ways.

Benefits of Branding for Companies

Researchers agree that branding provides a variety of important benefits to the industry. First, a clear brand identity helps marketers successfully differentiate their offerings from their competitors (Aaker, 2007; Keller, 2008). Second, successful branding helps firms reduce advertising costs by increasing awareness

of the brand name (Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Keller, 2008). Third, branding helps a firm to become a leader among the competitors in the same product category (Keller, 2008). As a consequence, a desirable brand identity not only helps increase the profit margin resulting from consumers' willingness to pay a premium for products, it may lead to profitable brand extensions into the same or different market. Finally, certain characteristics of branding help firms safeguard their product features through legal protection from counterfeiting (Schmitt & Simonson, 1997; Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Keller, 2008).

Benefits of Branding for Consumers

Branding provides consumers with three major benefits: risk reduction, information efficiency, and self-expression (Riesenbeck and Perrey, 2007; Keller 2008). Keller (2008) argued that branding helps consumers decrease the chance of choosing a product that may not perform well or meet their expectations. Thus, risk reduction is accomplished by providing assurance of consistent quality. Riesenbeck and Perrey (2007) suggested that branding may help consumers recognize and become aware of offerings in a specific product category, which helps them efficiently categorize vast amounts of information available about the product. Finally, branding involves creating cognitive structures that help consumers organize knowledge and experience regarding different products, which may help consumers transfer characteristics of the brand onto themselves (Riesenbeck and Perrey, 2007). This process, in turn, could affect consumers' perception of a brand as a reflection of their personality, character, social status, and lifestyle (Aaker, 2007).

2.3 Brand Image

Brand image has been discussed as an important concept in consumer behavior, because consumers' brand and product choices are based on their assessment of brand image (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990). Traditionally, marketing researchers (Frazer, 1983; Bullmore, 1984; Dichter, 1985; Keller, 2001, 2008) have acknowledged the cognitive and affective facets of experience associated with brand image; however, most studies have not captured the sensory aspect of brand experience. Specifically, Dichter (1985) defined brand image as the total set of impressions shaped by consumer interactions (e.g., observation and consumption) with a brand. Gardner and Levy (1955) and Bullmore (1984) referred to brand image as beliefs, perceptions, feelings, and attitudes towards a brand. Frazer (1983) argued that brand image is more strongly related to intangible aspects, such as social meanings and symbolic value than physical features of products. Similarly, Keller (2001, 2008) defined brand image as a consumer's perceptions and feelings associated with a brand, its offerings, and imagery attributes, such as user profiles, purchase/usage situations, brand personality, values, history, heritage, and experiences.

3. Noteworthy Contributions in the Field of Proposed Work

Significant contribution was made by Aaker (1997), Batra (2004), Keller (2008) in the field of brand personality, brand identity and brand image. Keller (2008) defined brand imagery as the way in which brand attempts to meet customer's psychological or social needs. Brand imagery is how people think about the brand actually done for them. Thus imagery refers to more intangible aspects of the brand. Imagery associations can be formed directly from the consumer's own

experience and contact with the product, brand and target market and usage situation or indirectly through the deception of these considerations as communicated in brand advertising or by some other source of information, such as word of mouth. Four major categories can be highlighted in creating brand image (i) User profile; (ii) Purchase and usage situation; (iii) Personality and values; and (iv) History, heritage and experiences.

One set of brand imagery association is the type of person or organization, who uses the brand. This imagery may result in a profile or mental image by customers of actual users or more aspirational idealized users. Association of a typical or idealized brand user may be based on descriptive demographic factors or more abstract psychographic factors. The demographic factors may include gender, age, race and income. The psychographic factors might include attitude towards life, career, possessions, social issues or political institution.

Brand may also take on personality traits and can be characterized as – modern, old fashioned, lively, exotic etc. Brand personality id often related to the descriptive usage imagery. Brand personality is also important in creating brand image. Aaker (1997) identified 15 facets of brand personality that encompassed 42 items. They were then grouped into five dimensions: sincerity (down to earth, honest, wholesome and cheerful), Excitement (Darling, spirited, imaginative and up to date), Competence (reliable, intelligence and successful), Sophistication (upper class, charming) and Ruggedness (outdoorsy, tough). These dimensions also contribute to brand image

Batra and Pamela (2004) studied the situational influences on the formation of the brand image and personality beliefs. They noted that non-verbalized personality

association of celebrity endorsers do indeed reinforce equivalent consumer's beliefs about a brand's fun and classiness benefits, but only if a social consumption context is evoked and if the brand image beliefs are appropriate to the consumer scheme for the product category involved.

Ogba IE and Zhenzhen (2009) in their research paper quoted that there is a growing recognition of the relevance of brand image to the success of market offerings and organization. Indications suggest that a good brand image can be enhanced customer experience and satisfaction for long term commitment. The outcome of this study concluded that brand image can positively influence customers' loyalty to a market offering and possibly boost customer commitment. The study identifies the degree of the relevance of brand image and its impact on organizations and their market offerings. The study also suggests that good brand image should positively impact the customers' loyalty, which on a long term also influenced customer perceived quality, enables satisfaction and also influenced to a greater degree, the extent to which customers were willing to express commitment to such offering for sustainable profits.

Presar Steven (2001) in his article "" Creating a Positive Brand Image" quoted that successful branding of a service or product is a matter of creating an image that is positive, relevant and memorable. Organizations wanted to create an emotional association (such as happiness or fun) with the product. According to researchers, there were two basic ways that an organization can create these associations. The first way was through direct experience. The second approach to branding that can be used more easily in a web environment was to create indirect association.

Punnathare C.J. in his article brand image key to brand growth mentioned the rebuilding brand image. He also quoted technology and customer loyalty as two independent facets of the picture. These facets need to be consistently reinforced with the right image and brand.

An article on brand image in finance.mapsodworld.com/image.html quotes that brand image is the most significant aspects associated with a product and is the perception of the consumers about it. There are various factors which lead to building up of the identity of a brand in the market: advertisement, quality of product, after sales service and other associated service. Brand image are not build in a day. The product need some time to establish themselves in the market. Brand image may vary among customers but the most significant of them persist. Brand image are also liable to change with the change in brand strategy of the company.

A study carried out by Prashant Mishra (2002) revealed many attributes of brand personality like purposefulness, energizing, deceptive, pleasing, pragmatic enchanting etc. These attributes also form a subset of brand image. In yet another research by Smriti Johari (2005) discovered many attributes of brand character like competent, philanthropic, earnest, perfect, courteous, amiable etc. these attributes also form subset of brand image. Bivainien (2007) in their study observed that brand image formation is a complex phenomenon and involves multiple factors. Their study revealed many factors like product's physical attributes, aesthetic benefits, symbolic benefits and emotional benefits. Further it was also observed that a fit between brand image and customer's self-image actually helps a customer in expressing himself in the society.

Customers' needs can be considered as the starting point for brand image formation. A need for product and services drives a customer towards brands. Bauer et al (2008) observed that product attributes perceived/actual benefits and attributes of the customer together influence image formation. The product and non-product related attributes accounted for more than 50% variance in their study. These results indicate that there are many other unidentified and unexplained factors which also influence image formation and need to be studied.

Industry image also influence brand image formation. An industry is a group of homogeneous companies with similar activities, similar products and similar technology and so forms a general image and influences a particular brand's image. A study was carried out by Burmann et al (2008) on influence of industry image on brand image formation. They identified three factors which influence brand image formation namely- industry factors, internal brand identity factors and customers buying motives coupled with past experience (personal factors). In a similar study in Tiwan Hung Chia-Hung (2008) concluded that public relation perception of an industry also has a favourable influence on brand image.

An individual company is a subset of an industry and hence comes next in brand image formation. Corporate communications play as important role in image formation. Hawabhay and Abratt (2009) studied role of corporate communication in image formation and concluded that a transparency in communication and interaction between employees customers help in image formation. In their study, media was found to have an exogenous role. They also concluded that brand image formation is a complex process and involves a large number of factors. Sjodin and Torn (2006) found that the corporate communication should be in line with existing brand image and any discrepancy between the two may negatively

impact brand image and may reduce credibility. Da Silva et al (2007, 2008) on similar lines concluded that an appropriate corporate brand image and values result in customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Reijmersdal et al (2007) studied effect of television on brand image formation. They found that television is an effective medium in image formation and concluded that brand image is formed in subconscious mind of consumers who watch TV programs where pictures were found more effective than words alone. This study indicated the importance of audio visual medium in image formation.

Celebrity endorsement is yet another method for brand image building through electronic or print media. Frequently and repetitiveness of celebrity endorsement help in creating an association between celebrity image and brand image and also acts as a successful co-branding strategy as observed by Jaiprakash (2008). This was found true by Batra and Homer (2004) in high social consequence situations and resulted in increase in purchase intentions.

Event sponsorship is also another effective method for brand image formation. A study carried out by Addis et al (2008) summarized that events employ large numbers of operational methods thus creating an experience for consumers. A deep involvement in these experiences builds a relation which when coupled with social consumption situation help in generating brand image. Events not only promote brand image but also sometimes convey a message of carrying out Corporate Social responsibility and as an additional benefit, the organization occupies a place of referred employer in consumers' mind (Faganel and Danijel, 2007). An active participation in events generates a holistic feeling in customers, increases communication and has a positive impact on brand image (Drengner et

al, 2008). An image fit is necessary for brand image building. Key image fit observed by Chavanat et al (2009) are product attribute fit, use imagery fit, personality fit, functional benefit fit, experience fit and symbolic fit.

Brand image formation is also a function of involvement and familiarity from a communication perspective (Srivastava and Kamdar, 2009). Results of their study emphasized on consistency of communication in adequate image formation. Many researchers observed that a distinctive offer is useful in image building and in creation of differentiation. However, Mandiae (2009) studied and found that it may create negative impact in some cases.

A research on brand preference and brand image dimensions by Salciuviene et al (2007) concluded that functional, experiential and symbolic benefits are associated with brand which result in brand preference and all three type of benefits should be viewed in totality.

Dong-Jenn Yang and Jyue-Yu Lo (2011) found that there is a positive transfer effect of Celebrity image on brand Image. It can be either ways. Romano, L. G. (2012) founded that positive brand image leads to brand loyalty. Solja Sulkunen (2012) has found that brand image formation happens through familiarity, attitude and knowledge of the consumer.

Rationale

Brand image is an important phenomenon for any organization and has direct relationship with brand equity and in turn affects the profitability of an organization. A careful planning and execution of company's brand management

program is of utmost importance in creating a positive impression and for long term benefits. Thus we may conclude that brand image is a complex phenomenon and has multiple dimensions. The review literature suggests that there is a wide gap in understanding the factors, attributes and variable responsible for building brand image in Indian context. A review of research studies has revealed that a few authors have made some passing remarks about the brand image. There is likely to be a change in the perception of brand image due to change in economic scenario and socio-culture of customers. New perspectives are evolving and old concepts are losing relevance. The present study is purported to bridge the gap and identify the factors and dimensions of brand image with special reference to durable and non-durable products.

4. Objectives of the Study

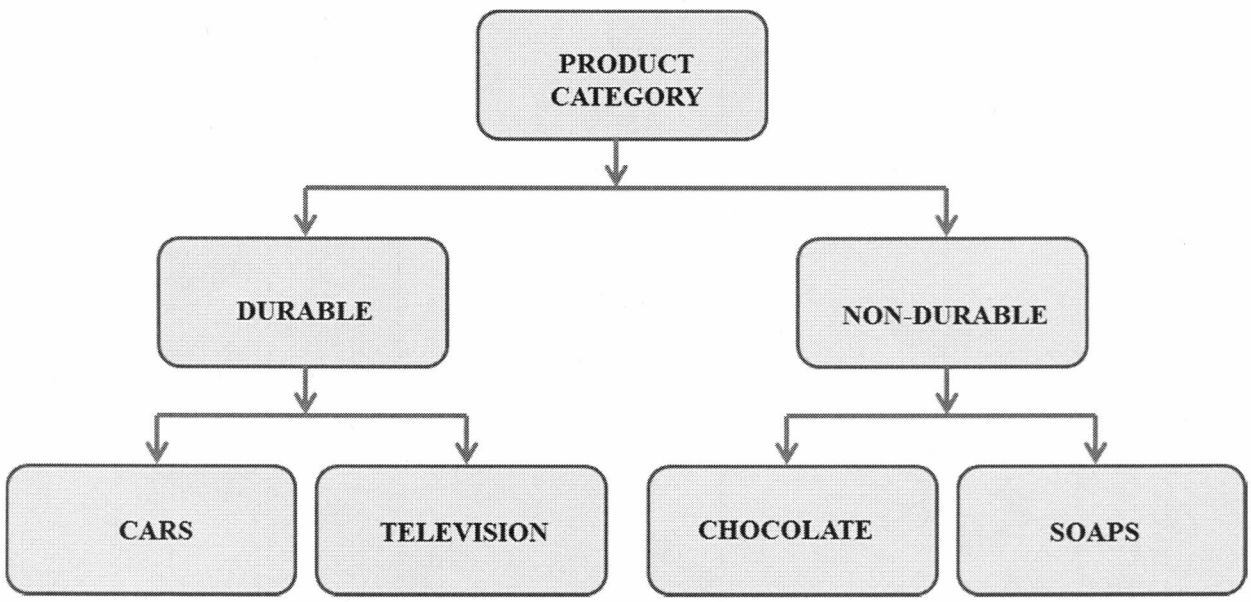
The research objectives of the study are as below:

1. To develop a standardized psychometric tool (instrument) to measure brand image of cars, television, chocolates and soaps.
2. To identify the factors and dimensions of brand image for durable products with special reference to cars and television.
3. To identify the factors and dimensions of brand image for non-durable products with special reference to chocolates and soaps.
4. To compare factors and dimensions of brand image for two durable products and two non-durable products.
5. To open new vistas for research.

5. Methodology

a. The Study

The present investigation will be an exploratory study to develop a comprehensive framework of Brand Image. The purpose of the study is to explore and propose a Brand Image model for two product categories i.e., durable (mid-size family cars and television) and non-durable (chocolates and soaps), in order to distinguish their images and to create an understanding of how the factors or dimensions can help people understand the intricacies of brands' purchase and use in a better manner. Secondly, development of a generalized product category specific framework and also to measure aimed at enabling researchers and practitioners to understand the symbolic use of brands in general versus the symbolic use of brands within particular category. Within the two product categories, two products for each product category will be investigated for the purpose of this study. The independent variables to be studied in this study are socio-demographic variable as gender, age, income, occupation and marital status whereas the dependent variable will be brand image.



b. The Design

The study will be carried out with a 'multi-stage multi-variate randomized' design to understand the perception of users about the image of the brands. The extraneous variables such as casual responses, faking culture etc., will be controlled by randomization and elimination.

Stage I:- A list of brand image attributes will be identified on the basis of literature review.

Stage II:- The list of brand image attributes identified in stage I will be churned out by eliminating similar attributes and will be presented to a small sample size with instructions to identify attributes describing brand image in both the product categories

Stage III:- A list of brand image attributes finalized in stage II will be presented on a seven point scale to a large sample size. Samples will have multivariate distribution in terms of gender, age, income, occupation and marital status.

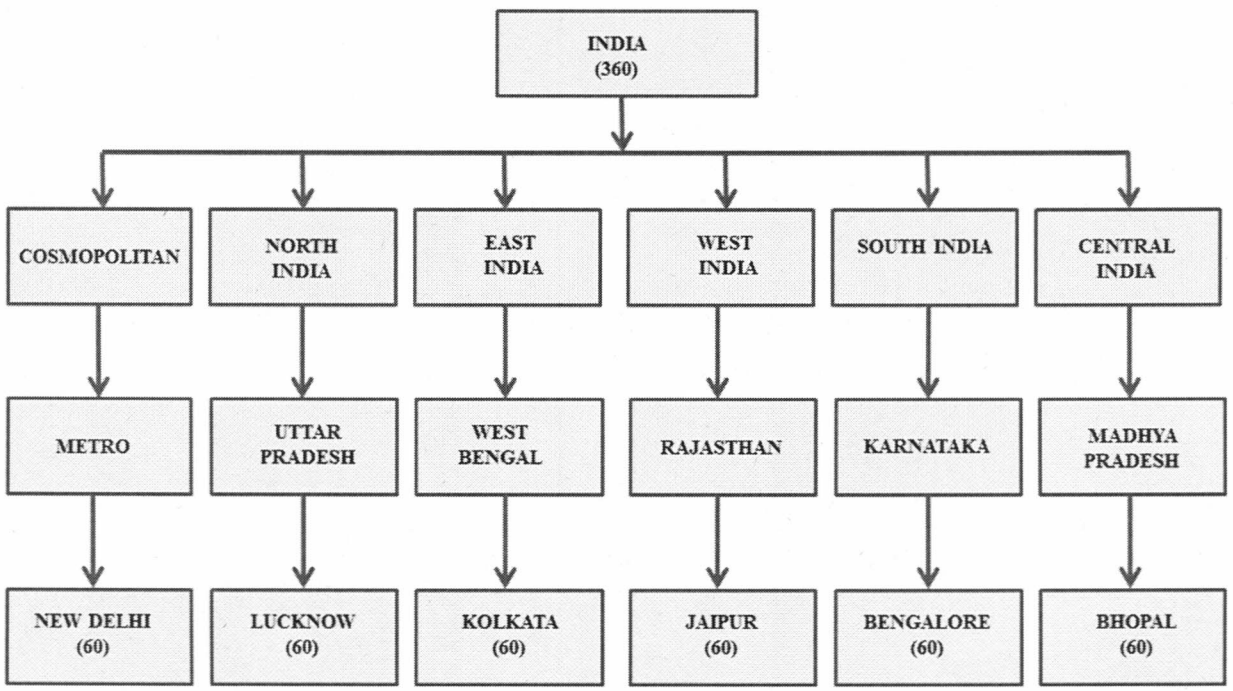
Stage IV:- A list of brand image attributes for both the product categories will be finalized by dropping the attributes have insignificant correlation.

Stage V:- Factor analysis will be applied on the data generated to identify the factors for each brand (product category).

c. The Sample

As the external validity and generalizability of the psychometric measure depends upon the subject on whom the study was conducted, a sample of the product users will be used. The sample areas were selected in a way that they can best represent

the entire geographical regions of the country. Consequently, five states from different regions of India and one cosmopolitan city will be selected for the study. They are: Uttar Pradesh from North, West Bengal from East, Rajasthan from West, Karnataka from South, Madhya Pradesh from Central India and Delhi as a cosmopolitan city. It is true that geographical location may not necessarily be the influencing factor of people's awareness but such a selection is necessary to know the level of awareness among consumers, from all the parts of the country. The sample will be selected from these five states and Delhi using the random sampling technique. Capital city of each state will be considered. It will not be difficult to identify a consumer as everyone is a consumer and either buys a product or avails a service for consideration. Total sample of 360 respondents will be taken for investigation, i.e., 60 each from all 6 cities.



d. The Tools

i. For Data Collection

Lack of comparable studies necessitates the development of an original instrument. After initial rounds of pilot testing and expert opinion analysis, the final Standardized instrument will be developed to collect data from the respondents. The instrument development will be done in several stages.

ii. For Data Analysis

Factor Analysis will be applied to understand the brand image of both the product categories.

6. Expected Outcomes of the Study

a. The study will result in the formation of the standardized psychometric tool to measure the brand image.

b. The study will result in constitutional framework of the brand image for durable products with special reference to cars and television.

c. The study will also result in constitutional framework of the brand image for non-durable products with special reference to chocolates and soap.

d. The study will also reveal the differential factors and dimensions for two durable and two non-durable products.

e. Outcome of this study is expected to stimulate the further research in this area.

7. Implications of the Study

a. This study will help marketers in understanding customers' mind set and in building image of their brands. It will in turn help organizations in repositioning their brand according to the contemporary brand image in customers' mind.

b. This study will provide a base to organizations for planning their marketing strategies in todays' dynamic scenario and will help them in making necessary modifications in marketing strategies.

c. This study will help the academicians in understanding the factors responsible in creating brands image and its dimensions for the durable and non-durable brands in Indian context.

d. This study will precipitate thinking to explore new domains of research.

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